

RECESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we recess until 2:15 p.m. for our caucuses.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:20 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

SAFE COMMUNITIES, SAFE
SCHOOLS ACT OF 2013—Continued

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, my colleagues, the week is finally here when we come to the floor to have votes on a piece of legislation we have been waiting on for decades. This Chamber is finally talking about what we can do to stop the plague of gun violence which has rippled through every single corner of this country.

As I watched these mass shootings play out over the course of the last 10 years—whether it be in Colorado or Arizona or Virginia—we think to ourselves that this is just something we are watching. This is just something that has happened somewhere else to someone else. We never think it could happen to us.

I will never forget that day I was in Bridgeport, CT, and it was right before Christmas. We were getting ready to take a train so I could bring my two little boys, along with my wife, to look at the pageantry of New York City. That was the day I got the call that there had been a shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

I thought it must have been a mistake. I thought, well, to the extent there is something going on at Sandy Hook Elementary School—this quiet hamlet in western Connecticut—it must be some disgruntled employee who walked in and had a grudge.

What I learned over the next few minutes during the half-hour drive to Newtown made my blood freeze. I learned this was a mass shooting involving dozens of adults and kids. I realized it was now happening in my neighborhood, in my State, in my town.

Unfortunately—as I stood at the firehouse where the community gathered that day and all the parents stood waiting for their children to come back or not come back from that school—I realized I had way too many colleagues

I could call upon for advice on how, as an elected official, to deal with a tragedy of this magnitude. I could call my friends in Arizona, I could call my friends in Colorado, or I could call my new colleague, Governor Kaine, from Virginia. There were too many places to turn, and it happened to us in Connecticut in a place we never, ever thought would be subjected to gun violence. We are finally at the tipping point on a debate of what we can do. Through all of the back and forth this week and last week about whether we would have a vote on this floor or would we have to overcome a filibuster, could we come to a compromise on background checks, would we add provisions to ban high-capacity magazines, underneath it all are these victims. There have been thousands of victims. There were the little girls and boys in Newtown, but also 16-, 17-, 31-, and 68-year-olds from across the country who have been gunned down over the course of the last several decades without this body raising a finger to try to make things different. Well, it is time for those victims' stories to be told.

As I did last week, I will be on the floor this week so I can share the stories of victims of gun violence. I will tell stories of lives which were cut way too short because of guns, and, in part, because this body has not been serious enough to stand up and do something about it.

I want to start this afternoon's remarks by returning to the place where it all started for me, and that is Sandy Hook Elementary School. There are 26 stories to tell of the people who lost their lives at that school that day, and I think I have gotten to about 20 or 21 of them. I will talk about the last few stories. It is unbelievable.

I have not had a chance to tell the story of Anne Marie Murphy, even though I told the story of what she did that day on the floor at least once. I just shared her story with my Democratic colleagues.

Before that fatal day, Anne Marie Murphy was an amazing person. Anne Marie was a special education teacher, and she loved her work. She sought out working in the area of special education because she knew she had a talent, as so many of her students and the parents who worked with her found out. They knew she had a talent for reaching out and touching little boys' and little girls' lives.

In fact, it is not a coincidence that a number of the kids who were killed in Sandy Hook Elementary School that day were kids with autism because Sandy Hook was known as a school that had a talent for reaching out to kids on the autistic spectrum. And Anne Marie was part of that story. She was a special education teacher. She was a mother of four wonderful children: Kelly, Colleen, Paige, and Thomas. She grew up in Katonah, NY. She graduated from St. Mary's School there before attending JFK High

School in Somers, NY. Then she got her degree in Connecticut at a school that actually was in the process of educating one of the other teachers who was killed that day, Victoria Soto. Southern Connecticut State University is where she got her degree.

She was remembered by her friends and family as sweet, happy, outgoing, and caring, and all of those characteristics came into play that day. I shared this story with my colleagues last week and then behind closed doors today, but I will share it quickly again.

That day, Anne Marie Murphy had in her charge a little boy named Dylan Hockley. When the bullets started flying, Anne Marie took Dylan into her arms and did her best to comfort him and perhaps shield him. When the police came into that classroom, that is how they found Dylan and Anne Marie—in each other's arms. To the Hockleys, the fact that there was some small measure of love being expressed to Dylan in the last horrible moments gives them some small measure of peace. She died a hero doing what she did best.

Anne Marie had been doing this for awhile, but she had a lot of years to give. She was only 52 years old. She could have continued to change the lives of children in need, children with autism, for another 10-plus years. Just think of all the lives she could have affected. How many more Dylan Hockleys could she have found and nurtured and helped work through their autism? We will never get to know. She was killed that day.

Grace McDonnell's parents are amazing. They have been down here to Washington a number of times already. They have led a lot of the debate in our communities in Connecticut about what we do to change the issue of guns and gun violence. They do so because they lost their daughter Grace McDonnell that day.

Grace was 7 years old when she died. Grace had asked for a purple cake with a turquoise peace sign and polka dots when she turned 7. That is what she wanted, I guess, for her birthday, was that purple cake. She loved the color purple and she loved the color pink, as so many of these girls did, and her funeral, which I had the honor of attending, was just buried in pink.

Grace loved the beach. One could always find Grace McDonnell on the beach. She loved country music. Taylor Swift and Kenny Chesney were amongst her favorites. She played soccer. She participated in gymnastics. She had a dog, Puddin', that she absolutely adored.

She was a very kind, wonderful little girl, so her parents have tried to think of the ways, big and small, in which they can try to pass along the kindness their 7-year-old little girl Grace showed for the world. They have done that by trying to explain to this country who she is. They have done that by taking all the art she produced—Grace was a fantastic artist, and many of us